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ABSTRACT

The Center for the Study of Evaluation's project, Evaluation and School Districts, used questionnaires to survey the heads of evaluation offices in metropolitan public school systems. This paper presents the preliminary findings of the survey. Most school systems have established a centralized program evaluation unit organized around three functions: administration, instruction, and support services. Evaluation units have little, if any, authority over administrative or instructional personnel. Reports produced by these units rarely offer recommendations or suggestions and few are involved in decisionmaking. In terms of school district and evaluation unit budgets, there is some relationships of money to enrollment. Evaluation unit directors feel that their personnel resources and budgets to meet Federal, State, and local requirements are inadequate. Testing was identified as the favored method for collecting data. Both norm and criterion referenced testing programs were used to report student achievement of instructional objectives. Evaluation units are typically not directly linked to either decisionmaking or instructional objectives. (Author/MK)

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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING IN URBAN SCHOOLS?

ED185164

Volume 9

New Perspectives on School District Research and Evaluation

Catherine Lyon
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Volume 9

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Catherine Lyon
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Paper prepared for the National Conference on Urban Education,
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Foreword

This monograph is one of a series of papers on the issues of instruction and learning in urban schools that were presented at a conference held July 10-14, 1978, in St. Louis, Missouri, sponsored by the Urban Education Program, CEMREL, Inc., and supported by the National Institute of Education. It is our hope that both the conference and the series of fourteen monographs that resulted from it will assist educational researchers and school practitioners in identifying and analyzing instructional and learning problems in urban school settings, and will contribute to the development of strategies for the improvement of schooling for students.

Titled "What Do We Know About Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools?", the 1978 conference focused on an examination of research findings on the teaching-learning process in areas most germaine to and under control of the schools. The key problems to which the papers are addressed are the assessment of learning outcomes and the analysis of the relationships between instructional and other inputs and learning outcomes. Important contextual issues not under the full control of schools, such as community and parental involvement and the impact of federal and state governments in improving educational opportunities, were addressed at the conference as well.

The conference was conceived, in part, as an initial step in the development of a state-of-the-art review of the most critical issues faced by educators in urban schools who struggle with the morass of general educational problems, exacerbated by decreasing public confidence in large city schools, declining student enrollment, and increasing numbers of poor and minority students. While the conference does not exhaust discussion of the problems

that are particularly significant in the urban school setting, it forms a convenient focus for viewing the larger issues affecting education in our cities.

The educational innovation and change growing out of more than ten years of effort since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 -- the primary stimulus for federal support of research and development in education -- has had the least impact on the student populations typical of the urban school setting. With this concern as a primary consideration, ten months prior to convening the conference, CEMREL's Urban Education Program had begun work with a network of twenty big-city school districts and state departments of education in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. Thus, the conference and the research findings of national authorities was undertaken to lay a foundation for future work in urban educational research and development and to undergird present efforts at improvement of schools in the region.

The Conference Design

To guide the development of the presenters' preparation of their papers, topical questions were prepared for them by Urban Education Program Staff and a paper format was recommended. Each presenter prepared a full paper based on the topical questions and results were summarized by the writers during general sessions of the conference. Because of a wide range of perspectives held on the conference issues, discussions precipitated by reactor panels composed of other prominent researchers, practitioners, and community leaders in education followed each general conference session. More than one hundred educational researchers and practitioners from across the country attended the conference. The invited participants came from school districts and state departments of education from nineteen states; thirteen institutions of higher education; four federal agencies; numerous educational laboratories and research and development centers; and seven social service agencies.

The conference was divided into two types of sessions: general sessions, wherein the nationally recognized speakers who wrote papers presented their summaries; and forum sessions, wherein reactors helped analyze the presentations and examine the concrete recommendations put forth by the general-session speakers. All participants were encouraged to present questions and reactions during these forum sessions.

Francis S. Chase, Director of Urban Education Studies, Dallas, Texas, gave the keynote address at the opening session of the conference, a banquet on Monday evening, July 10. His topic, "Promising Developments in Urban Education," summarized field studies that he was conducting under sponsorship of the Council of Great Cities Schools and the University Council for Educational Administration under a grant from the Spencer Foundation. Chase is Professor Emeritus of the University of Chicago, where he also served as Chairman and Dean of Education for ten years.

The Conference Topics

Each of the presenters had been asked to design a paper by responding to salient topical questions, drawn up by CEMREL's Urban Education Staff. The questions that were posed originally for each of the writers are presented below. Most of the resulting papers were developed into monographs for this series.

Compensatory Education: A Congressional Perspective Christopher T. Cross Minority Staff Director Committee on Education and Labor U.S. House of Representatives.	What is the current state of the evidence concerning projected changes in legislative mandates, and what may we expect related to changes in policy governing federally funded compensatory education programs?

Effective Teacher-Support Systems to Improve Instructional Conditions in Schools Joseph D. Liggins Assistant Superintendent for Staff Development Houston Independent School District	What teacher support systems are most effective in improving instructional conditions for students? What is the role of in-service training, and what types of in-service training can be recommended to urban educators? What other resources--such as additional curricular materials, support from teacher aides and volunteers, time re-allocations, team teaching arrangements, etc.--can be demonstrated to be effective in improving students' learning opportunities? What is the state of the evidence?
Assessment That Respects Complexity in Individuals and Programs Judah L. Schwartz Professor of Engineering, Science and Education Massachusetts Institute of Technology	How can we best measure and analyze the effects of instruction on students' learning in the major school subjects: What are the most appropriate times and strategies for measuring the effects of schooling on student learning? What do we learn from means of assessment other than standardized achievement testing? When and under what circumstances is it most appropriate to use alternative or complementary strategies for assessing program effectiveness?
Achievement Tests in Urban Schools: New Numbers Eva Baker Director Center for the Study of Evaluation University of California, Los Angeles	How can we best measure and analyze the effects of instruction on students' learning in the major school subjects? What are the most appropriate times to measure the effects of schooling on student learning? What are the cautions which should be taken into account before any attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of programs primarily on the basis on standardized achievement data, especially when the number of individual implementations is large and the actual conditions under which the implementations took place are not well documented?
Summer Drop-off and The Effectiveness of Compensatory Instruction Paul T. Hill The Rand Corporation	What has the era of compensatory education program development contributed to knowledge about achievement in the basic school subjects in urban schools? Where is the evidence? What, if anything, does the evidence indicate about methods for improving basic skills achievement? What, if any, recommendations can be made to school district planners on the basis of existing evidence?

Instructional Ingredients for the Development of Beginning Reading Competence Isabel Beck Co-Director Learning Research and Development Center University of Pittsburgh	Much research, program development, and implementation of efforts to improve achievement in basic school subjects has been concentrated in the area of reading. What approaches to instruction in reading have been successful in increasing achievement? Is there evidence that certain approaches are best suited to the needs of particular populations? Do these effects generalize to other areas of school learning, such as mathematics, social studies, and science?
A Discussion of The Literature and Issues Related to Effective Schooling Ronald Edmonds Director Center for Urban Studies Graduate School of Education Harvard University	Are there schools that have demonstrated a higher degree of effectiveness in the delivery of instruction in the basic school subjects than others serving similar student populations (in terms of socioeconomic backgrounds, family characteristics, minority populations, etc.)? What characteristics distinguish these schools from less successful schools in similar situations? What is the evidence that the explanatory characteristics have been correctly identified, and how strong is that evidence?
The Educational Promise of Cultural Pluralism Vera John-Steiner and Larry Smith Department of Educational Foundations College of Education The University of New Mexico	How can we approach problems of teaching and learning in urban schools so that the racial and cultural diversity of the school population is recognized, respected, and utilized constructively, to the extent possible? How do we differentiate between basic academic skills, which all students need to acquire for successful participation in our hetergeneous society, and curriculum decisions which can and should be tailored to the needs and interests of different sub-cultural groups? Do students benefit from participation in racially and culturally hetero-geneous classrooms, or perhaps from certain kinds of heterogeneous instructional settings but not others? What is known about these issues, and how much consensus is there about the cultural values on which schooling must be based?

New Perspectives on School District Research and Evaluation Catherine Lyon Center for the Study of Evaluation University of California, Los Angeles	What is the role of research and development processes in improvement of instruction and learning in basic school subjects in large urban systems? In what form are these processes being applied to the teaching and learning process in urban schools? What is the evidence and how solid are the indications that use of these proceses has resulted in improved student achievement?
Effective Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools Jane A. Stallings and Shirley W. Hentzell Stanford Research Institute	Looking specifically at the interaction of student, teacher, curricular and school organization characteristics, what instructional conditions encourage achievement in basic school subjects? What evidence is there, and how good is it? How are the effects of instructional conditions on student achievement measured? On the basis of existing evidence and trends, what recommendations can be made for improving students' instructional environments?
Mathematics and The Urban Child Marilynn Suydam Center for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education The Ohio State University	Mathematics is a school subject which is generally considered basic, insofar as mathematical skills are required for successful adult functioning in our complex society. What evidence is there to indicate which approaches to instruction in mathematics have been successful in increasing achievement? Is there evidence that certain approaches are best suited to the needs of particular populations? Do these effects generalize to other areas of school learning, such as reading, social studies, and science?
Basic Skills in Urban Schools: A View From The Bilingual Classroom Concepcion Valadez Graduate School of Education University of California, Los Angeles	Since the second largest minority population served by many urban school districts is a bilingual population, what is the current state of the evidence about the effects of programs developed especially for bilingual students? What, if anything, does the evidence indicate about the effects of such programs on basic skills achievement?

School-Community Relations and The Urban School
Dean Bowles
Director
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Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning

What do we know or what can we learn about the influence of parental and community involvement in schooling on student achievement? How does parental and community involvement affect the teaching-learning process? If information is not available to answer these questions on even a tentative basis, what types of research are recommended to study this aspect of students' lives more effectively?

Frank Sobol
Basic Skills Group
National Institute of Education

Are there research and development products which have contributed to improved instruction and increased student achievement in basic school subjects in large urban school systems? What is the evident and how solid are the indications that use of these products has resulted in improved student achivement?

A Summary of The Conference Findings
Edmund W. Gordon
Director
Institute for Urban and Minority Education
Teachers College
Columbia University

In light of the evidence produced by examination of these issues, what concrete recommendations can be made to school districts concerning the improvement of instruction and learning in basic school subjects? In light of the same evidence, what research and development agenda should be the focus of future study and program development?

Dr. Francis S. Chase,
Director of Urban Education
Dallas, Texas

Keynote Speaker for Conference Banquet: "Promising Developments in Urban Education"

--Harriet Doss Willis
Director
Urban Education Program

The reader should be aware that New Perspectives on School District Research and Evaluation was prepared in July, 1978, and is a very early look at data on Evaluation and School Districts. Some of the data reported here may be interpreted differently in the project's final report, now available from the National Institute of Education.

Catherine Dillon Lyon
September, 1979

New Perspectives on School District Research and Evaluation

Catherine Lyon
University of California, Los Angeles

My colleagues at these CEMREL meetings were eloquent in both analyzing urban education problems and in expressing commitment to doing something about them. And with the help of Chairman Frank Chase, I realized that the spirit, if not the letter, of these CEMREL presentations must be embraced by educators, particularly those responsible for evaluation. The "new perspectives" on school district evaluation offices that follows is offered to help keep the green light lit for urban education. Otherwise, it is very likely that it will be our humiliating experience to repeat the past.

I. INTRODUCTION

Are school district evaluation offices involved in the renewal of public education? Late in 1979 comprehensive information about school-district

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CATHERINE LYON was formerly Project Director at the Center for the Study of Evaluation, the University of California, Los Angeles. She works now for the International Paper Foundation in New York City.

evaluation units will be available. Very recently, the Center for the Study of Evaluation's (CSE) project, Evaluation and School Districts, surveyed heads of evaluation offices. Some early, strong signals from this data will illuminate the practice of both evaluation in metropolitan* public school systems and the impact of conceptual contributions.

II. EVALUATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS: HISTORY

To understand today's school-district research and evaluation offices, it is necessary to start in the early twentieth century with a look at the metropolitan systems' research or efficiency bureaus.

Raymond Callahan's work (1962) brilliantly documents the scientific-management era and the consequences for American public education. School systems were pressured to demonstrate "business-like" administration. And research-efficiency bureaus sought to protect the schools from these critics, primarily through surveys and, later, testing programs. Between 1920 and 1965, study after study of these research units documented the typical activities of testing, recordkeeping, time and motion surveys, special studies of salaries, budgets, class size, and staff (Note 1). Characteristically, these bureaus reported directly to the superintendent of schools.

After 1965, when Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), new demands for program evaluation were made of school systems. Typically, this additional responsibility was absorbed by the established research-efficiency bureaus, which became today's district research and evaluation offices. Like the early concern for efficiency, this demand for evaluation also came from critics of public education. (See Millbrae McLaughlin's Evaluation and Reform, 1975, for the history of initial objectives and reform.) But these reformers had different objectives: Some saw it as an accountability vehicle for parents, others as an opportunity

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* "Metropolitan" describes school districts with an enrollment exceeding 45,000 youth. Centralized program evaluation units exist in 90% of all metropolitan school systems. Frequently, the unit is called "Office of Research and Evaluation."

to improve educational decisionmaking. Both groups, however, saw evaluation as central to change.

Public educators were less enthusiastic, wanting general, rather than categorical aid. Initially, the United States Office of Education downplayed both the accountability and decisionmaking features of evaluation. There was also some opposition to evaluation requirements within the educational research community, on the grounds that it was "impractical and unrealistic."

In 1968 Mosher provided a report on school research-evaluation operations. Almost without exception, every district research unit was responible for the administration of the testing program, and the collection of information and data from other systems. Mosher summarized the findings:

> Our data indicated that, however useful other activities may be, school district research offices have made a very limited contribution to instructional improvement and organizational change. (p.69)

School district research-evaluation units were continuing a half-century commitment to administrative objectives.

III. EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION: TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

With this historical backdrop in mind, we can look at two major schools of evaluation available to practitioners through university programs and the literature. Starting in the 1930's, Ralph Tyler (1949) began to react to the research-efficiency bureaus' preoccupation with data collection, including the administrative use of tests to categorize and place students in school systems. He wanted these operations to shift from an exclusive concern for administrative objectives to improving instruction. Tyler wanted evaluation to focus on the learner, to be part of curriculum development, to continually improve education by assessing and reassessing instructional goals, objectives, processes, and materials for their impact on student achievement.

Tyler thought schools should be "appraised in terms of their effectiveness in attaining important objectives." And he wanted parents to be informed--not just about administrative data, but about the achievement of instructional objectives.

In 1971, "a new definition of evaluation" emerged from the Phi Delta Kappa National Study Committee on Evaluation, led by Stufflebeam:

> Educational evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives.

This statement drives Stufflebeam's evaluation-decisionmaking model (CIPP) relating "context, input, process and product evaluation to planning, structuring, implementing, and recycling decisions, respectively." Defining evaluation as decisionmaking incorporates and enlarges Tyler's concern for instructional objectives. To what extent do the operations of school-district evaluation offices concern instructional objectives or decisionmaking in general?

IV. EVALUATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Project Description

Before describing current evaluation practice, some background on the national project, Evaluation and School Districts, is appropriate. This three-year project, which I direct, is funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE) and is designed to analyze educational evaluation at the local level to improve its practice and ability to renew education. As part of the project, evaluation practitioners and scholars participated in identifying some major unknowns in the practice of educational evaluation:

- Which school districts have evaluation offices?
- How are evaluation units organized?
- How are evaluation units financed?
- What are the characteristics of evaluation-unit personnel?

- What are the offices of evaluation doing in school districts--testing, program evaluation, development, research, data collection?
- How are evaluation unit resources and products used?
- What resources and constraints to doing the job are reported by heads of evaluation offices?

These questions are driving both the project's surveys and fieldwork. One of the project's purposes is to provide accurate demographic data about school-district evaluation offices. Earlier this year a survey was conducted to identify school systems with central evaluation offices.

Introductory letters explaining the study were sent to all school districts (750) in the United States with enrollments of 10 thousand or more students.* Superintendents were asked to return a three-question postcard indicating whether their districts had evaluation units. Through this survey and followup, information was obtained from all of these districts. Overall, just 45% of the districts with an enrollment of 10 thousand have a centralized unit with responsibility for program evaluation. Students in this enrollment category represent approximately half of the 44 million youth enrolled in American public school systems. Almost all (90%) of the 82 metropolitan districts (45 thousand-plus enrollment) report having a central evaluation office. Students in this enrollment category represent approximately 20% of the American public-school population. Five metropolitan districts reported never having had an evaluation office and three systems reported that they do not now have an evaluation unit, but had one in the past.

In the early stage of Evaluation and School Districts, this postcard inquiry identified respondents for the Survey of Public School District Evaluation Units. Eighty-one percent of the 74 metropolitan districts with evaluation units have completed a survey organized around the

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* According to 1976-77 HEW reports, there are approximately 15 thousand public school districts in the United States. Most of these are very small systems with fewer than 5 thousand students.

basic questions mentioned earlier. Some early, strong signals from this data, including district and evaluation office organizational charts, evaluation reports, and budgets, follow.

School District Evaluation: Organization

Our survey respondents report that metropolitan school systems have typically established a centralized program evaluation unit, often calling it an Office of Research and Evaluation. (Most unit names include one or more of the following terms: research, development, evaluation, planning and testing, but evaluation office is used here.) These districts are characteristically organized around three major functions: administration, instruction, and support services. The earlier research-efficiency bureaus typically reported to the superintendent. Today, evaluation offices most frequently report to an assistant superintendent or director in administrative services. Approximately 30 percent report directly to the superintendent. Very few metropolitan units report to Instruction Services.

From this organizational information alone, some consequences of evaluation activities and use can be predicted. An evaluation unit located in the central office of a school system, inside the administrative services branch, can be expected to serve administrative rather than instructional objectives, continuing the research-efficiency bureaus' pursuits.

The importance of the structural location of evaluation responsibilities was addressed by Wholey et al. in work concerned with federal evaluation policy (Note 2, 1969). Recognizing that differences in the responsibilities of policymakers and program managers imply a natural division of evaluation responsibilities, they recommended that:

> An evaluation concerned with overall assessment of program success be responsible to the highest policy-maker; an evaluation that weighs effects of alternative methods of strategies within a program should be responsible to the program director.

If the function of a school-district evaluation office is to provide general assessment of the school district through annual norm-referenced achievement testing, the structural location might be different from one expected to modify instructional programs. Yet our data suggest that organizational size and complexity may have more effect on the reporting and locational relationships of evaluation offices than other considerations have.

While both schools are focused on program evaluation, neither the objectives nor the decisionmaking approaches have much to say about where or how evaluation should be organized within a district. Of course, Tyler's earliest thinking concerning improving education through appraisal was based on decentralized curriculum development and evaluation with school staff and student participation.[1]

One might expect the decisionmaking school to be sensitive to structural location. However, Stufflebeam acknowledges that the initial work had "serious shortcomings" for practitioners:

> Anyone who searches these chapters for help in setting up his own evaluation unit will find only a few rules of thumb, some incomplete case descriptions that illustrate more the fact that units <u>can</u> be established than how to go about doing it, and a few exhortations.

While Stufflebeam does not deal with organizational issues, "some principles for relating evaluation to decisionmaking" are discussed, In Stufflebeams' view, evaluators are not decision makers. Rather,

> The evaluator should neither make nor implement program decisions. The essence of his role is to provide information to enable the decisionmaker to perform these tasks. (p.93)

He observes that "judging is the central term of the definition of evaluation." Then he distinguishes judging from "the act of judging," which is not central to the evaluator's role. Stufflebeam acknowledges that this is a controversial choice:

> Considerable dispute evolves from this point. Scriven, for example, regards the evaluator who refuses to engage in decisionmaking as having abrogated his role. (See R. Tyler, R. Gagne, & M. Scriven, Perspectives of Curriculum Evaluation, 1967.) Stake argues that the evaluator who does participate in decisionmaking destroys his own objectivity and hence his utility. (See Robert E. Stake, "The Coutenance of Educational Evaluation," Teachers College Record, April 1967.) The position of this book is essentially in agreement with Stake's position. (p. 43)

What is the current relationship of school-district evaluators to decisionmaking? While formal organization charts most frequently show evaluation offices in what could be a line position, these units actually have little, if any, authority over administrative or instructional personnel. The closest approximation to formal authority occurs in those evaluation offices with responsibility for district achievement testing. However, this relationship is typically limited to administering rather than to selecting tests. (The relationship of Offices of Research and Evaluation to testing will be described and analyzed later in this paper.) Further, written reports produced by evaluation offices very rarely offer recommendations or suggestions. As Weiss (1972) observed, "Evaluators are often reluctant to draw conclusions from their data" (p. 26).

Weiss comments further on this situation:

> Judgments and recommendations for action have to be made somewhere. Unless the evaluator plays a leading role in the process it may not get done. Riecken recommends that the evaluator interpret the findings, and. . .help implement them (pp. 84-104).
>
> Longood and Simmel also believe that the evaluator has a responsibility to the organization to work for the use of evaluation results, and they encourage the evaluator to emerge from his sheltered nook and engage in the rough and tumble of organizational decisionmaking. (pp. 311-317)

Whether stemming from organizational placement or from reluctance, relatively few metropolitan evaluation offices report involvement in decisionmaking. Only 35% of respondents report "taking part in the allocating of district funds," the project's proxy for decisionmaking. And fewer than half (40%) of the respondents "take part in selection of

curriculum materials." These early data suggest that the typical metropolitan evaluation-office relationship to decisionmaking and instruction is indirect at best.

Given this context, how important are organizational issues to practitioners? We asked heads of evaluation offices, "What do you think would increase the effectiveness of this evaluation unit?;" a list of 13 items was given for checking or ranking. One item received the most consistent attention--Additional Professional Staff Members. Fifty percent of our respondents ranked that item, making it a priority. Communication to the Superintendent and School Board was next likely to be ranked (37%); Increased Access to Computer Time and Programs was third (32%). To a degree, these items could all be selected as a function of organizational difficulties. However, the item most directly related to organizational concerns, Reorganization of Evaluation Unit within the School District (e.g., reporting relationships), was ranked by just 25% of the respondents, ranking it fifth among choices, behind the three items mentioned above and a fourth--Information about Effective School District Evaluation Practices.

Further, just 35% of our respondents either checked or ranked Organization as a priority in improving their effectiveness. At this stage of the project, several interpretations co-exist: First, that heads of metropolitan districts agree with the continuing administrative rather than instructional dominance of evaluation activities; second, that respondents do not think this situation can change; third, that the areas identified by heads as related to effectiveness are actually symptomatic of large, unrecognized problems; fourth, that the office's activities and products are preceived by decisionmakers as not useful to local improvement, or that evaluation heads perceive that more personnel alone would be the key.

Another organizational topic not directly addressed in the survey has consistently surfaced in fieldwork. The issue was anticipated by Stufflebeam:

> Evaluation is a complex process. It is everyone's responsibility. Professional evaluators are needed, not to take overall evaluation responsibilities, but to provide leadership and coordination in evaluation. (p. 105)

One of the consequences of a centralized evaluation office is the implication that all formal assessment is now the responsibility of "evaluators," not teachers or principals. If research and evaluation is to participate in the renewal of public education this particular organizational constraint will want careful attention. All other organizatioanl issues pale in comparison.

School District Evaluation Offices: Resources

What are the resource realities for school district evaluation offices? We asked respondents about the level, sources, and adequacy of funding.

In surveying evaluation units, we asked heads to report the total evaluation unit budget for 1977-1978 and the school system's total operating budgets. Reported amounts varied widely, even for districts of the same size. However, looking at the range of enrollments over the metropolitan category (45 thousand to 1.1 million), there is some overall relationship of money to enrollment, both in terms of the school district and the evaluation-unit budgets.

We also asked respondents, "Is the 1977-1978 evaluation-unit budget adequate to meet federal, state, and local requests for evaluation activities?" Forty-seven percent answered yes and 53% said no. Some of the complexity involved in these assessments, however, surfaced when in metropolitan districts with similar enrollments, evaluation unit heads with smaller budgets replied yes and heads with strikingly larger budgets responded no.

Evaluation directors think that their personnel resources are inadequate; however, respondents reporting adequate budgets but inadequate numbers of personnel may be commenting on access, not money. Respondents were asked, "Are the evaluation unit's personnel resources adequate to meet current demands for evaluation unit activities?" Seventy-three percent said no. The next question was, "If you replied 'no' . . .what are the major personnel problems regarding professional staff?" Overwhelmingly (98%), heads of metropolitan evaluation offices responded that the major problem is

"too few staff," rather than "too high a rate of staff turnover" (7%), "limited technical abilities of staff"(30%), "limited organizational or interpersonal skills of staff" (14%), "low salaries" (11%), or "other." Limited Technical Abilities was the second most popular, although a very infrequently selected, item.

At this stage of analysis, it appears that respondents' perceptions about budget adequacy may not be directly related to evaluation dollars per student. Rather, it may be a function of the organization's definition or evaluation. However, the operational realities of evaluation varies below 1% of the total school-district budget. For 1977-1978, respondents were asked to "estimate the percentage of the school district's budget that is allotted to the evaluation unit." Few metropolitan districts allocate more than 1% of the total budget to the evaluation office, with the typical contribution not exceeding one-half of 1%.

What is the profile of funding sources for metropolitan district evaluation offices? We asked respondents to estimate the percentage of evaluation units operating (non-capital) budget that comes from the major sources. The average evaluation-office funding profile is: 52% from the local school district, 25% federal, 22% state money, with slightly less than 1% coming from private foundations or other sources. Local contributions to the evaluation unit budget vary from 0 to 100%. Variations in the amount of local commitment also appear not to be related to district size. There is enough local budget in almost all metropolitan evaluation units to give the appearance of discretion. In future analyses, we will use survey and fieldwork data to discover whether there are differences in evaluation office activities related to the level of district financial commitment. Do evaluation operations with heavier local contributions (over 50%) use a variety of methods to collect information--observation rather than testing, for example? Do they provide formative as well a summative information? Do they serve both administrative and instructional objectives?

To what extent have two major schools of evaluation thought linked ideas with financial requirements for district evaluation activities? Generally,

the "objectives" school has emphasized organizing school learning experiences, not district operations. Stufflebeam has made several recommendations for financing evaluation units:

> Underfinanced programs providing limited personnel and facilites can only lead to inadequate information for decisionmaking. Educational agencies must provide a financial base from district funds. . .The financial base will depend on the size of the district and the amount spent on education. In larger districts, seven percent of the total budget may be adequate. In smaller districts, as much as 15 to 20 percent is needed. (p. 290)

Assuming that Stufflebeam's 7% estimate of the necessary local budget commitment to evaluation units has some basis in fact, the typical reality of an approximately one-half percent contribution describes a resource gap between the decisionmaking approach and actual evaluation operations. What are offices of evaluation currently doing? Do their methods and activities reflect the various theoretical approaches? Are differences in activities related to the resource gap between actual evaluation unit resources and those suggested by Stufflebeam for a decisionmaking unit? Standardized testing can be less expensive than the variety of information sources suitable for context, input, process, and product evaluations.

How do evaluation offices spend their money? The profile of the average evaluation unit follows: 52% of the budget goes to evaluation; 20% to testing (exclusive of that done for research, development and evaluation); 14% to research; 11% to development; and 4% goes to "other" activities.

Typically, testing expenditures (exclusive of testing for research, development, and evaluation) rank second to evaluation.* However, eight of the sixty metropolitan units responding spent more than 40% of their

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* At this early point in the survey questionnaire, these terms are defined by the respondent. Later questions about unit activities, including research, development, and data collection are implicitly defined by sub-items developed and reviewed by evaluation practitioners and scholars.

resources on testing. Offices of evaluation generally spend fewer dollars (less than 14%) on research or development. But a few units spend more than half of the budget on development. Another small number spend over 40% on research. In summary, evaluation offices typically rank evaluation as the highest expense, with testing, research, and development following in that order.

While these data do not reveal the total amount of money spent on testing, other data indicate that testing is a major activity. Even units that allocate little of their budget to non-evaluation testing generally administer district norm-referenced tests and, where they exist, criterion-referenced tests; consequently, testing expenditures are often included under evaluation in our budget data. In addition, (non-evaluation) testing ranked second in office expenditures. Since standardized tests are relatively expensive, this information implies that district evaluation units do a lot of it. These budget data suggest that evaluation office expenditures continue the traditional emphasis on testing.

Do the data collection methods used by evaluation offices confirm the dominance of evaluation by testing?

Offices of Evaluation: Methods Used to Collect Information

Through our survey of heads of evaluation units, we inquired about the approaches used to collect data and the relative amount of office time the unit spends on each approach:

> Listed below are some possible methods an evaluation unit might use to collect information. Please check only those methods that your office used in 1977-78, then rank order THREE of the methods checked, beginning with "1" for the method taking most time, "2" for the method taking the next most time, etc. (Lyon, Dosher, Williams, McGranahan, and Walker Note 3)

Responses to this question describe testing as the favored method for generating data. Seventy percent of the units report testing as their major

approach to data collection, 18% report survey questionnaires, while 7% and 3%, respectively, rank classroom observation and interviews as the major data-collection activity. All metropolitan districts report using tests and surveys to collect information. But 25% never engage in classroom observation, and 22% never conduct interviews, suggesting that in these offices connections with school-level personnel and instruction are remote. According to our respondents, the methods listed above exhaust the approaches evaluation units use; none of the metropolitan districts reported other tactics.

In Tyler's earliest work, in 1949, he advocated observations, collecting student products, and recording library use, as well as testing to generate information. In discussing context, input, process, and product evaluation, Stufflebeam mentioned testing as one means of collecting data, particularly for context and product evaluation.

While the survey data do indicate some use of other methods it is much less used than one would expect of an information-for-decisions approach, particularly one with the purpose of renewing education. Given the preoccupation of evaluation offices with testing, the use of this information is of great interest.

Evaluation Offices and School District Testing

What are evaluation offices' responsibilities for testing programs? We asked our respondents this question:

> If a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced testing program is administered districtwide in this school system, how are the results actually used?

Overwhelmingly, heads of evaluation offices reported that both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing programs were used to report student achievement. A minority of the respondents cited evaluating school and district programs as a use of tests. In our experience, this

usually means an annual report based on standardized achievement tests. Although "making funding decisions" would be the most direct evidence of this high-expenditure activity, just 50% of respondents linked to decisionmaking used norm-referenced tests, and 21% use criterion-referenced tests this way.

How Are Unit Evaluation Activities Used in School Systems?

Are the offices' evaluation activities likely to inform a wide range of inquiries associated with decisionmaking? Units were asked to identify their evaluation activities, and to rank the 3 types taking the most time. A clear pattern of responses emerged for the metropolitan districts. Assessing the Results of Instructional Programs and Assessing Student Achievement of Objectives were always checked and, with extremely few exceptions, ranked 1 or 2 out of the top 3 involving the most time.

These responses were selected from a variety of activities, including those commonly linked with the major decisionmaking model (CIPP). These latter activities, including Check That Implementation Conforms to Program Specification, Modify Programs Using Evaluation Results, and Identify/Appraise Educational Goals or Objectives, were nominated very rarely as a unit activity and then hardly ever among the top three in unit time.* With the exception of one evaluation office, two items were never checked or ranked by metropolitan districts: Assist in the Selection of Instructional Programs, and Compare Costs/Benefits of Alternate Instructional Programs. Basically, the units' activities reflect a narrow approach to educational evaluation.

School-District Evaluation Offices and Decisionmaking

Heads of evaluation units were asked to summarize their relationships to decisionmaking in the district. The question was asked in a way that would

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* A small amount of time spent on an activity may have a critical impact. But activities supporting a decisionmaking approach to evaluation typically require more time than testing.

overemphasize, rather than understate, this affinity:

> Does the evaluation unit take part in any of the following activities? Check only those that apply.

The single item with the strongest response was Non-Evaluation Unit Staff In-Service Training (65%). Of all the categories available, this item is the one with the greatest distance from decisionmaking. Usually, this activity means instructing school district personnel, and less often, parents, in the interpretation of test results. Selection of Curriculum/Program Materials enjoyed the next highest response (40%). The implication that this is an area of decisionmaking is countered by the well-known tensions between the separate instruction and evaluation organizations.

As David Cohen (1970) observed, "Decision-making, of course, is a euphemism for the allocation of resources--money, position, authority, and so on." Thirty-five percent of our respondents reported that their evaluation office took part in the "allocation of district funds." Relatively few metropolitan evaluation units take part in other school district functions: Review of Teacher Performance (7%), Facilities Planning (e.g., space allocations) (27%), and Collective Bargaining (15%). Generally, school-district evaluation units do not engage in either the type or the range of activities associated with school-district decisionmaking.

The Evaluation Office's Relationship to School District Administration and Instructional Activities

While anticipated by the previous discussion, the relationship of evaluation to administrative and instructional objectives is probably most readily discovered by the patterns of client use.

We asked respondents:

> Are data generated by the evaluation unit used by school district participants? Circle "1" if the participants rarely use data; "2" if they sometimes use it; and "3" if they consistently use it.

The following participants were identified: superintendent, principals, board members, parents of local citizen groups, teachers, central office staff, federal agencies, state agencies, program director.

Over half of the heads identified central office staff (51%), superintendents (56%), and program directors (66%) as consistent users of evaluation office data. Certainly more groups were likely to be perceived as "sometimes" users: principals (59%), board members (60%), or local citizen groups (63%), and teachers (67%).

Although respondents were reluctant to cite any group as "rarely" using data, parents or local citizen groups were more often to be included in this characterization (29%) than any others, with board members second (21%) in this category. State and federal agencies were almost as likely to be designated as "sometimes" or consistently" using data.

This first-cut analysis of users of evaluation data, in conjunction with the earlier discussion concerning evaluation organization, finance, and functions supports the conclusion that the average metropolitan evaluation office of today continues the traditional pursuit of administrative, not instructional, objectives.

Conclusion

The operations of school-district evaluation offices generally do not support informing a wide range of decisionmaking and accountability questions involving all levels of school district personnel. Typically, school-district evaluation units are not directly linked to either decisionmaking or instructional objectives. And we have described the historical, organizational, and financial characteristics constraining these operations.

In 1980, when analysis of this year's survey and fieldwork data is completed, these preliminary results will be reviewed by practitioners and scholars in education. Their responses are expected to heavily influence the project's final report, including recommendations.

If we assume that the basic value of evaluation is progressive--that is, tied to improving the quality of education, then the field of educational evaluation needs to face some issues. With regard to educational effectiveness there are generally two camps in the United States: those who claim an historical perspective and point to increased population attending and graduating from high school, and those who look at the declining levels of reading achievement. Both of these groups--perhaps with different urgencies--understand the importance of continually improving the effectiveness of public education.

School districts recognizing this need will be concerned with the institutionalization of assessment processes and information. In some districts these goals will be narrowly defined as accountability and the use of standardized achievement tests. These districts will organize their resources in a variety of ways, including today's typical evaluation office. Other districts will define their assessment goals more generously.

These districts will need to identify their objectives and to consider alternative strategies for meeting them. Cost considerations will be more complex for this second group of school systems. And these districts should carefully consider whether a centralized evaluation unit with more resources is appropriate or whether the system's process of assessment will include all school district personnel, particularly teachers and principals as equal partners. If instructional renewal is the object, then the latter approach is a more cheerful prospect. Heads of evaluation offices have a particular but not exclusive opportunity to provide leadership in this world of educational assessment.

Finally, future theoretical work would be well advised to generate concepts, ideas and methodologies based on actual school district objectives, functions, and resources.

FOOTNOTES

1. In 1963, Cronbach identified an important challenge to the traditional emphasis on school-based curriculum development. Contemporary efforts to improve course contents, including the National Science Foundation and the United States Office of Education activities, proceeded on the premise that curriculum is best developed centrally. (Course improvement through evaluation, Teachers College Record, May 1963).

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